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## Educational Development in India During the Next Twenty Years: 1981-2000\*

In my presentation, I do not propose to go into many details but want to make a few major points. The first thing that we must accept is the need for a long-term educational plan. If you want to plan well, then you have to plan for a 100 years. Education is a long gestation process and unless you really have a long-term vision your planning can never be right. That is why, as early as 1937, when the Indian National Congress appointed a Planning Commission under Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, there was a sub-committee to prepare an educational plan. Owing to various difficulties the plan never got prepared, though some ideas were put forward.

The first long term plan we ever had was in 1944, covering a period of 40 years, 1944–1984, known as 'Post-War Educational Development in India.' As I said, this was the first long-term plan of education and like all first attempts, not the best. It had many weaknesses. The first was a very narrow objective. The objective was to create in India by 1984, an educational system which existed in England in 1939. That is how it starts and that itself has stultified the plan. Then it laid down principles which would not be acceptable to the leaders. It provided for universal primary education for all children between the ages 6-14, i.e. the first cycle of education. But secondary and higher education were to be highly selective. Secondary education was provided for one child out of every five with a selection at the eleventh class, according to the then practice in England. Higher education was provided for every one out of 15 who completed secondary school. Technical education was provided to a few persons. The liquidation of adult illiteracy was visualised.

Now, though the universal primary education part and adult education part were acceptable, the highly selective system of secondary and higher education based on the British model was never acceptable here. The plan

had another weakness; it did not allow for an increase in population. Today, one might get a laugh out of its forecast that India could have a good system of education by 1984 and it would cost only Rs. 200 crores a year! We are spending today over Rs. 3000 crores a year and are yet far from the goal. This was a first attempt at a plan, made under an alien government; but still, I respect it because it was an attempt to have a long-term plan.

The second attempt was made by the Education Commission who submitted their report in 1966. But it did not look forward to the next forty years. The world was changing too fast. In 1944, people could believe that they could plan for forty years. This was impossible in 1966. So, the Commission took a shorter period, the twenty-year span of 1966–1986, and gave a detailed plan which was certainly better than the first plan because, naturally, they had more experience to guide them. They felt that it would be possible to liquidate illiteracy, provide universal education up to class eight to about 50% of the children; higher secondary education to about 20%, higher education to about 2 to 5% of the under-graduate population. Overall, it was felt that education would cost about Rs. 54/- p.a. per head in 1966. This was a much better plan as such.

Now today in 1979, two things have happened. One, this planning concept itself is treated as out of date; and two, a good deal of what the Commission recommended has not happened. And even though the plan is up to 1986, it is no good now. For in 1979, we are not at that point where the Education Commission expected us to be.

Let me give one example. The Education Commission expected that expenditure on education would increase from 3% of the National Income to 6%. In 1960 we spent 1.2% of the National Income on education. By 1966 it had risen to 3%, that is a little more than double. So the Commission felt that by 1986 it would double again from 3% to 6%. The latest figures show that the expenditure has increased in rupees but the value of the rupee itself has gone down. Rs. 622 crores was the expenditure in 1966, and as I said, today it is about Rs. 2,800 crores. But as a percentage of the National Income, we spent 3% in 1966 and now we spend only 3.4%. This estimate is on the basis of a favourable estimate of National Income today. If you take other estimates you might find that we are spending 3.1% now as against 3% in 1966.

Thus the old perspective is no longer valid. We have to prepare a new perspective for educational development and the pity is that there is no such perspective at all. There is no national planning by the Government of India as to the lines on which it proposes to develop education within the next 20 years.

\* The Duhr Memorial Lecture, delivered at St Xavier's College, Bombay in 1979.

Now let us make out the difference between a policy statement and a plan. We cannot have a plan without a policy statement. A policy statement is only the first step, but it is not a plan. It is easy to say that we will have universal primary education and, as you know, we are very adept in making policy statements of this type. But the question is, how much is it going to cost, where is the money going to come from, what are the strategies we are going to adopt? Unless all these questions are answered in detail and a plan of action is prepared with sufficient quantitative details, it is not a perspective plan.

The Janata Government was trying to prepare a policy statement and it has published what you call a Draft Policy Statement. I do not know what is going to be the fate of that Draft with the fall of the Janata Government. That statement is going to become an orphan, literally. What type of new government will we have, will the new government adopt it, in what way will it change it? All this is an open issue. Now we do not have even a policy statement for the next 20 years and we do not have a plan at all. As of today, there are no steps being taken to prepare such a plan. This is a very sad state of affairs.

We might say that there are countries that do not have a plan. America does not have a plan. England does not have the type of planned education I am referring to, but it has some plan. In a country where society is fairly stabilized, the problems are not of the order that we have. In countries which have not accepted the techniques of planned development, the absence of an education plan can at least be understood. But what we cannot understand is the absence of an educational plan, a long-term perspective in a country which has accepted the principle of planned development. It only means that in this country education still continues to be a marginal issue—we may have it or we may not have it. This is something against which we have to struggle.

I think what we should insist upon is that the government should prepare a plan. But let me also say another thing. The two plans that I mentioned earlier are national plans. A national plan is much easier to prepare because the differences between the States, between different parts of the country, all get hidden in the averages. My experience is that a national plan based on averages is a good plan for the country but does not apply to any situation whatsoever on the ground.

For example, if you say 80% of the children in India attend primary school, this is just imagination because in no case will you find this true. In States like Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra enrolment is nearly 95% and if you go to a State like Orissa, in certain parts it is just 20%. So, these averages are as deceptive as the average depth of a river which according

to an old story was supposed to be 2½ feet and the people who tried to cross it on that assumption invariably got drowned.

A national plan is good for indicating certain broad directions but it cannot lead to action. What can lead to action on the ground is a State plan and, if you ask me, even further district level planning. Long-term plans of educational development in the States have not been prepared at all so far, and educational plans at the district level, even short-term plans, do not exist. Planning is not an exercise to be done only at the national level and, when I say that we want truly constructive plans for development, we really want them at all three levels, national, State, district and even at a fourth level i.e. the institutional level. Of course, the scope and nature of these plans will be different, but this type of detailed planning at various levels is crucial to the implementation of a given policy. This is something which will require intensive effort in the next two or three years because if we succeed in creating an atmosphere of this type, and if such plans are prepared, the very exercise itself will generate forces and an insight which will help us to improve our educational setting.

Now I come to the second point. How shall we set about preparing such a plan? Here I want to make an obvious point, one which is generally not taken note of. Our practice so far, even though we adopted the technique of planned development as early as 1950, has been this: to present the country with one plan, a one bulk offer, and just say, "take it, or leave it"; whether it be the first plan, the second plan or even the sixth plan.

The Planning Commission puts forward a plan which goes through various processes and is then presented to Parliament and to the people. It is open for discussion and for criticism. Probably marginal adjustments are seen as possible; but they are not generally done. For since it is a one-plan structure, you tell the people, "Look, this is what we think is best for you, take it or leave it".

My point is that if we really want to start a debate and make people conscious of the problems, the issues involved, and the alternatives that are open, we should not have one plan but several plans based on alternative strategies and alternative assumptions, placed before the people. Let the people discuss and decide what they will accept. The public gets educated not by presenting to it just one facet of a problem but by presenting a variety of facets, a variety of scenarios, and then asking it to choose. If we accept scenario A, then this is something that is likely to happen; if it is B, then this; and if it is C, then this. We should prepare plans on the basis of more than one assumption and these basic assumptions could be very different. For instance, how would you like to promote higher education in the country? Today 85% of the colleges are in private hands and privately managed and there is a talk about nationalizing.

I would say this question really becomes debatable if we prepare three separate plans for higher education. One on the assumption that it is entirely a state-managed system, another on the assumption that the present system continues as it is, and a third with some modification of the present situation.

If you take two or three of these various approaches and work out the details, probably the different aspects of the problem would be much clearer than what they are now. So, my second point really is that if we wish to make a plan, it should not be one plan but a set of alternative plans. Let us say a minimum of three or four, each based on clearly stated assumptions.

To illustrate my point as to what happens in this approach, let us take only one set of assumptions. Let me take the plan prepared by the Education Commission, for the twenty-year span of 1966-86. What were the assumptions made by the Education Commission? I am merely stating them, whether one agrees with them or not.

1. There will be a strong and stable government both at the Centre and in the States and these governments will be committed to the development of education.
2. There would be a limit on population growth. There are three projections: High, medium and low. The Commission accepted the low projection, i.e. a 3.5% population growth, a gradual reduction to 1.5% over a period of 25 years.
3. A high rate of growth of national income. Our experience in the last 30 years is that national income has grown at 3.7% per year, and per capita income has doubled in 20 years.
4. From 3% of national income, the money spent on education would rise to 6% as the plan was made.

One thing I can say frankly is that the plan was made on ideal assumptions and the last 10 years have shown that these ideal assumptions are now a thing of the past. If these assumptions had been made in 1947, when the first plan had been prepared, one could understand. But the 12 years after 1966 have refuted them and if I look to the twenty years ahead or even ten years ahead, I find even the first condition — a strong and stable government at the Centre and at the State level committed to educational development — may or may not materialize.

Another caution is, when we make a long-term plan with a clear set of assumptions which are good but utopian as it were, then we have a plan which looks fine, looks achievable, but still is a plan which is very difficult to implement. I have no objection to a plan like this. I would

call this scenario one, but it should not be the only scenario. We can have other scenarios in which these utopian assumptions are changed.

For example, if we take one extreme of the matter, can we not make another set of assumptions? What happens if the things, as they stand now, were there in the immediate past also and still continue? It is a very likely thing to happen. Then let me say what will happen (i) the population will not grow so slowly, it will grow much more rapidly, (ii) the national income will grow not at 6% but at 3.7%, (iii) the share of education within national income will not be doubled in twenty years; but in twelve years it will have risen from 3% to 3.4%.

We also find another thing happening. With every plan the size of the plan is increasing and the money allocated to education is decreasing. In the first plan, 7% of the plan was allotted to education whereas in the larger sixth plan the allocation is only 2.8% of the plan. I am quite sure that in the next plan, it will be below 2.8%. For as the committed expenditure on education increases it gets more and more difficult to find additional funds and the trend is for additional funds available to be less. The Education Commission assumed that the largest part of education development would be diverted to primary and adult education but, for the last 10 years, the greater part has been spent on secondary and higher education and this is very likely to continue.

Why not have another scenario? Let us extrapolate whatever has been in the past, add to it some obvious things like political instability and political weakness, and then you get a picture at the other extreme. If you were to contrast the two scenarios and take any other scenario, as the case may be, and make the assumptions, then we get a much better insight into the problem and can really make a draft plan and get public opinion on the plan.

Let me illustrate my point by giving one more example. The question which the Education Commission had put to us was: Who will bring about the change after all? The Education Commission wanted changes to be brought about and the question is who will be the agent of change? The Education Commission's view was that the responsibility for transforming education should be that of the Central and State Governments. Very correct. And the Commission said, if they do not accept the responsibility, nobody else can or will.

I do not want to argue whether this assumption was right or wrong but what I find is that, if I take that assumption for the next 10 years, nothing will happen in education because the government today, as I see it, responds only to pressures. Running the government is reduced to crisis management. You turn from one crisis to another and you listen to the voice

which at the moment seems to be the most dominant and you make compromises.

If this is the art of government, then to imagine that the government will undertake the development of education will not be correct. The only idea I can put forward is that those who believe in the significance of education must launch a movement among the people and outside the government, thereby creating enough pressure to which the government will respond. Only then it is possible to get any policy enunciated. Before I went to Delhi as an Adviser to the Government of India, I was working in a village. When invited to go to Delhi, I accepted, since I believed that an educational revolution would come to the village from there. Twenty years later I realise that I had hoped for the impossible. The chances of an education revolution going from the village to Delhi are greater than that of a revolution from Delhi going down to the village. But you need workers at both the fronts as at many other fronts.

The assumption of the Education Commission was that the change agents for a new system of education are mainly teachers, students and education administrators, and if the State Government gave the lead and the financial support, the necessary transformation of education would be brought about by these three groups : teachers, students and educational administrators.

I find that in the last 12 years this assumption has not proved correct. I am not prepared to believe that teachers can be the change agents in education because no education reform can be got free. It involves a cost and unless the groups concerned are prepared to pay the price, I do not think education will change.

The attitude of the last 10-12 years, the general attitude, was very beautifully described in a book entitled "*The Little Less*". This put forward the philosophy of how workers are trying to get a little more money for a little less work and the logical conclusions that follow. I find that teachers often take the same role. If you propose an education reform, it involves more work for teachers, and I have found, to my sorrow, that opposition comes from teachers rather than from others. Worse still, in some of the North Indian areas, which I will not name, the teachers do not oppose reform directly but they set up students to oppose it. I find that organized student bodies are instigated by teachers who spend money on maintaining goondas to create trouble and see that the reform is not introduced. I am not saying that everybody is like that, but it is a glib assumption that teachers and students can be change agents in education or that education administrators can play this role. We really have to give some serious thought as to who really are going to be the change agents.

I am going to give you some illustrations of what I have reviewed. My salient proposal would be that in a long-term perspective plan the most important issues are the following :—

1. What are your assumptions for social change, for social development ? Because in the absence of social change you cannot plan change in education. You have to make some assumptions about it.
2. You have to make assumptions about what type of an educational system you will need in the country.
3. You have to make assumptions about the role of education.
4. You will have to make assumptions about who will be the change agents, and
5. How you are going to administer and finance the system.

All these are very important things and there are not just one but several assumptions that would follow. This would be an exercise for the next twenty years with more than one scenario. When these are compared and contrasted, a policy statement and programme will emerge.

My last point is : Who will do this ? One answer could be that the Government should appoint another commission. Now the commissions take a long time to complete their reports. They are also very costly. Commissions that write brief reports are rather rare and their recommendations are very often unimplementable.

I would say after the experience of the last Education Commission that it would take great moral courage on the part of any government to appoint another commission now. So, I will rule out that possibility. Then, what are we to do ? A second way is for a standing committee of the Planning Commission to prepare a long-term perspective plan for education. I tried to sell this idea to the Planning Commission but I find that they do not bite, for the one obvious reason. Their argument is that if they make a 20-year plan for education, they will have to provide money for it. They do not want to be caught eating their own words. They would rather not prepare an educational plan than prepare one and then say, 'We cannot find money for it'. Generally, any attempt at providing an educational plan in the Planning Commission, is not done. I have asked the State Governments to do that but I find that they are unwilling to make long-term plan for exactly the same reason. Besides, as precedents show, it is the weakest and politically lightest person that is usually selected as the Education Minister whether it is in the State or in the Centre. Or, even if it is a member in the Planning Commission, the case is the same more often than not.

When the Government of India Act of 1919 was being passed, a system of dyarchy was to be introduced. The Montague-Chelmsford report was to show how to divide the government into two parts and to recommend which departments should be transferred to India. That Report laid down four conditions to decide whether a department should be transferred or not:

1. A subject in which India has shown great interest to be transferred.
2. A subject in which there are plenty of opportunities for social service.
3. A subject in which mistakes are not likely to be made.
4. A subject in which mistakes even if made are not going to be very disastrous.

Education came under all the four conditions and was transferred. That basic attitude remains unchanged to this day. That is why I have really given up the hope of the Planning Commission ever preparing a long term perspective plan.

The point is, if we want such a plan there has to be a sustained official initiative. Somebody, some group of people, have to take it upon themselves to do this. The Carnegie Commission in the United States was a Commission on Higher Education. The US had no plan for any subject including education, but there was a group of people who thought there must be a long-term perspective plan for higher education because in so far as school education was concerned it was already universal. The only area which they thought was the weakest was that of higher education. So the Carnegie Commission undertook a number of studies and prepared an eight-year plan of development for higher education in the United States. Such a plan once prepared, will certainly have a deep effect in educating public opinion, in moulding policies and so on. I think something similar would happen even in India if we really were to do it.

What I would say is that there is challenge to educators who are interested in the building up of a good educational system in the country. It is not necessary that they should agree. In fact they should have sharp differences of opinion, contrasting or opposite views and people should come forward with one, two, three or even four plans.

If we begin now, we are not beginning too early and if what you do may not have an effect on the Sixth Plan it will certainly have an effect on the Seventh and later plans and this is something I would request educational institutions and educationists to do today.

J. P. Naik

## An Alternative System of Health Care Services in India : Some General Considerations\*

### *The Search for an Alternative*

I attach great importance to the word 'alternative' in the theme of this oration. Let me, therefore, explain in some detail what I have in mind.

When we became free, we decided to expand and improve the health services of the country as one part of a comprehensive package of programmes then undertaken to raise the standards of living of the people. Our approach to the problem, however, was rather simplistic. We adopted the western model of health services which, we thought, was ideally suited for our country. It may be pointed out that our doctors were then being trained in institutions which maintained standards comparable to those in England and thus got an automatic right to practice or serve in the U.K. The basic emphasis in this model was on the adoption of the latest medical technology developed in the West and to make it available to the people of this country through,

- the expansion of the bureaucratic machinery of the medical and public health departments,
- the expansion of the institutions of medical education to train the agents required for the delivery of health care (such as doctors or nurses),
- the creation of the necessary infrastructure needed for the purpose from the big hospitals in metropolitan cities to the primary health centres and dispensaries in rural areas, and
- the indigenous production of the essential drugs and chemicals required.

\* The fourth Sir Lakshmanswami Mudliar Oration delivered at the Sixteenth Annual Conference of the All India Association for the Advancement of Medical Education, at Chandigarh on Saturday, 12 March, 1977.